



WFTU Declaration HALT RACIST ACTS

The WFTU expresses its deep disquiet and its indignation at racist and xenophobic acts in Europe and in the world.

There is not one day that passes without workers, men, women and children, falling prey to racist acts perpetrated by fascist groups, in the image of what are becoming daily events in Germany.

The WFTU offers its sincere condolences to the families of those who have paid for these barbaric acts with their lives and assures its solidarity with all those who see their dignity as a human being held up to ridicule.

At the recent trade union symposium held in Athens, the WFTU, together with other anti-racist forces, brought the attention of all to the dangers generated by the situation and called upon all trade union forces and others to act against the dangers of racism.

The WFTU reaffirms its solidarity and supports the position of the trade unions and anti-racist forces which are acting and demanding that the authorities responsible take all measures necessary to impose heavy penalties upon the perpetrators of these inhuman acts.

The WFTU supports the positions and develops its own activity along with all those who, confronted with

the dangers created by this situation, demand real measures to attack these problems at the roots.

The economic plundering of various countries in the world, a factor in the displacement of populations and immigration, should be ended; and in all areas should be created the conditions for economic development responding to the satisfaction of the needs of humanity in order to halt the permanent worsening of mass unemployment and social upheavals, a factor in insecurity and xenophobia.

The disastrous consequences of fascism for the world 50 years ago are not so distant a memory that they should be forgotten.

The WFTU considers that faced with the current situation and the very grave dangers of aggravation that it generates, and the development of extreme nationalism, as shown by the situation of the peoples in the former Yugoslavia, all trade unions and all forces acting for the respect for human rights, peace and social progress must take a united stand for effective action, to fight together against racist and xenophobic acts, and to impose real and lasting solutions paving the way for a world characterised by peace and solidarity.

LATIN AMERICAN TRADE UNIONS FOR NEW FORMS OF UNITY AND SOLIDARITY

A broad Unitary Latin American Workers' Meeting convened by several organisations of various regional or international affiliation and independent organisations took place between 2 and 6 November in Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic.

The meeting was attended by representatives from 42 organisations from 19 countries in the region, as well as by the Latin American Workers' Centre (CLAT), regional organisation of the WCL, the Permanent Congress for Trade Union Unity of Latin American Workers (CPUSTAL) and the Latin American Confederation of Public Sector Workers (CLATE).

In the Santo Domingo declaration adopted unanimously at the end of the meeting, the

participants declared themselves in favour of new forms of unity of action and solidarity that are "broad, respectful, and devoid of conditions, impositions or hegemony of any sort", as an instrument for the building of the unity of the peoples of the region, "rejecting the possibility of suffering another 500 years of oppression and dependency."

At the heart of the participants' concerns as regards economic development were the condemnation of the damaging consequences of neo-liberal economic policies and the promotion of alternative solutions on the basis of independent and coordinated studies by the trade union movement, as well as the fight against the payment of foreign

debt while calling for an expert audit of interest rates and legitimacy.

A Latin American Day of Protest against Neo-liberalism is planned for March 1993.

The participants unanimously emphasised the right of peoples to self-determination, condemning in particular the aggressive character of the "Torricelli law" passed recently in the United States and directed against Cuba and its trading partners, and the US Supreme Court ruling on the extra-territoriality of its decisions.

The demand was expressed for all foreign military forces to be removed from Latin American soil.

Continued on page 2

INDIA

MASSIVE MARCH TO PARLIAMENT IN DELHI SPONSORED BY TRADE UNIONS

On 25 November, hundreds of thousands of workers and employees from all over India took part in a massive March to Parliament, to reiterate their disapproval of industrial and economic policies of the government which were formulated in terms of the conditionalities laid down by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

The march to the parliament culminated in a huge mass rally in which over a million people took part.

The march was organised by a Sponsoring Committee set up at the National Trade Union Convention against Economic Policies of the government which was held in September. The Committee included representatives of national trade union centres including the All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC-WFTU), the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS-ICFTU) and most of the autonomous industrial federations covering public services, railways, banks, insurance, agriculture, etc.

Industrial workers and agricultural labourers who had travelled to the capital shouted slogans demanding a self-reliant economy, trade union rights, higher wages, job security and measures to improve living standards of the working people.

EC UNEMPLOYMENT TO RISE TO 11% IN 1993

Henning Christophersen, the Economics Commissioner of the European Community (EC) has predicted that EC unemployment would rise from its present rate of 9.6% to 11% next year. According to the Financial Times (21 November), that would be higher than in the last economic cycle when EC unemployment peaked at 10.9% in early 1986.

Nearly 40,000 redundancies were announced throughout the EC during the third week of November, about a quarter of them in Great Britain. After Britain, the week's heaviest job losses were recorded in Germany.

Daimler-Benz confirmed a cut of 40,000 in total by the end of 1994 most of which had already been announced. BASF announced another 2,000 jobs to go, Audi about 3,500. Separately, post office workers warned that 30,000 to 40,000 jobs are threatened by rationalisation plans.

In Italy, Fiat has 35,000 workers laid off until the end of November, because of falling demand. According to trade union estimates, the government's privatisation programme could cost 150,000 jobs.

ETUC, CGT CALL FOR FIRM MEASURES AGAINST GROWING UNEMPLOYMENT

Before the extraordinary summit in Birmingham on 16 October, the Executive Committee of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) had adopted a "declaration for heads of state and government" to demand a radical change in the current economic positions of the Community and its member states.

According to the ETUC, several governments, using the Maastricht Treaty as a pretext, have introduced measures relating to public spending and social security that do not respect the principle of equity and which threaten important social rights of the workers, the unemployed, pensioners, migrants, etc.

It was urged that the Birmingham summit should "reverse the restrictive, monetarist policies" that

have contributed to the deterioration in the employment situation and which alienate public opinion from the Community.

At the same time, it was announced by Emilio Gabaglio, the ETUC General Secretary from Italy that the confederation intends to "force management to negotiate" at Community level, in particular by organising "a demonstration in every European capital in the spring of 1993".

Speaking on these issues on behalf of the CGT of France, during the same period, Gerard Alezard, CGT Secretary, stated that "there is an urgent need to put a stop to the decisions taken within companies and which threaten more than 10,000 jobs in industry and services".

LATIN AMERICAN TRADE UNION MEETING

Continued from page 1

The trade union organisations present, representing the most diverse tendencies (amongst the participants were WFTU and WCL affiliates, ICFTU member organisation and unitary centres with no international affiliation), called for a strengthening of links of solidarity in the fight for union rights and the defence of national sovereignty, as well as for the defence of the workers, particularly, the workers in the informal sector. The demands of the communities of indigenous peoples, the defence of national interests in the face of processes of privatisation of the economy, the defence of the environment, etc.

The declaration adopted at the meeting called for the commemoration of May Day in a unitary form and with the same framework of consciousness raising on neo-liberalism, the defence of democracy and freedom. It was suggested:

- To promote at the ILO, the creation of a permanent tripartite commission to analyse, coordinate and follow aspects relating to the topics of employment, wages, housing and security;

- To negotiate with national, subregional and Latin American governments and parliaments the submission to the International Labour Office in The Hague of a request for interest payments on foreign debt declared illegal;

- To promote before national, subregional and Latin American parliaments the discussion of the support for the programme for disarmament and development.

Welcoming the unitary process under way, such as those in Peru, Central America, the participants decided to charge the Coordinating Committee that prepared the meeting with continuing its work and convening a second meeting in the near future.

IN 20 YEARS, RURAL POVERTY ROSE 40%

A study released by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the agency, on 23 November has stated that the number of rural poor in developing countries has risen 40 per cent over the past 20 years.

The report covered 114 countries with large rural populations.

It said that the trickle-down theory of economics and attitudes towards the poor prevented them from being integrated into the country's economic structure. It was pointed out that the 40% rise in rural poverty was an indication of failure among international development programmes. Criticising rural development strategies pursued in various countries, the report said that most programmes were heavily based on capital investment. "Development is not something that happens in spite of poverty. It is something that happens because of it."

The IFAD study further stated: "States will not need massive infusions of foreign aid as farmers will generate their own savings by investing in local production." The report said that the poor were poor, because they had been denied resources available to them - land, credit, technology and social services.

U.N. GENERAL ASSEMBLY CALLS ON U.S. TO WITHDRAW EMBARGO ON TRADE WITH CUBA

The 47th Session of the United Nations General Assembly adopted on 24 November a resolution calling upon the United States to withdraw the economic, trade and financial embargo directed against Cuba.

The United States had only Israel and Romania voting with it in opposition to the resolution while 59 countries, including Canada, France and Spain, voted for the resolution which was moved by Cuba. There were 71 abstentions.

The resolution of the General Assembly has no binding character but is a strong expression of the concern of the international community over violations of the principles of the U.N. Charter and norms of behaviour in international trade and economic relations. In the present instance, it is a strong expression of solidarity with Cuba and its struggle for an end to the hostile actions of the United States administration of trade boycotts and embargoes.

STUDY ON ECONOMIC DAMAGE OF OUT-OF-CONTROL HEALTHCARE COSTS

According to a study released by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), working families took the equivalent of a five per cent pay cut in 1992 and lost 398 jobs since 1980 because of the failure to control healthcare costs. Controlling healthcare costs could have reversed one of the most damaging economic trends of the last decade - the decline in real wages for most workers.

The study, based on calculations by the non-partisan health economics consulting firm Lewin-ICF, showed that limiting healthcare cost increases to the rate of overall economic growth would save businesses an average of \$15 per employee per year and the 1992 federal budget deficit 27 per cent. The total sum for excess health costs since 1980 - a portion of health costs that exceeded GNP growth for the period - is \$1.2 trillion.

The SEIU has pointed out that without adequate funding of health services and concerted action to control the underlying causes of rising health costs - wasteful competition among health care providers, unrestrained use of new technology, unnecessary duplication of costly administrative services by private health care concerns, and excessive prices for physicians' services, for example - needed to insure that the health needs of the population are met.

The study stated: "Is it realistic to assume that cost increases can be limited to the rate of growth of the economy? Other countries do. Their experience indicates there is a variety of ways to control costs, whether a healthcare system is publicly or privately financed. In the U.S. is unique among industrialised nations because it is only country that relies almost exclusively on the private marketplace to control costs. . . .

"Some major healthcare reform plans now being debated propose to control costs by limiting costs to a share of GNP. Others continue to recommend reliance on market forces. The Lewin-ICF analysis is strong historical evidence of the failure of the latter."

USA OPPOSITION MOUNTS TO NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

American workers are not letting up on their campaign to expose the dire economic impact of the lame-duck Bush administration's trade pact with Mexico, the AFL-CIO NEWS (9 November 1992) reports.

The journal further stated that recent demonstrations in Milwaukee and San Diego - just two locations around the country where factories have shut down and moved to Mexico - underlined the anguish of dislocated U.S. workers.

The workers and the unions want Congress to scrap the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) scheme and have the new administration of President-elect Bill Clinton renegotiate the accord with effective safeguards for jobs, wages and the environment.

Clinton has said he would not sign implementing legislation until additional agreements are reached with Mexico and Canada to protect labour standards, worker safety and the environment, as well as authority to act in case of "import surges". And he has called for separate legislation to boost trade adjustment assistance for workers and to strengthen enforcement against the import of scab labour.

According to recent research, U.S. corporations already operate some 2,000 "maquiladora" plants on the Mexican border that account for 500,000 jobs and where workers earn as little as 88 cents an hour. Labour economists estimate that the trade agreement would result in the loss of 550,000 more jobs.

A Mexican trade unionist told an anti-NAFTA rally in San Diego recently that Mexican workers already are saddled with "miserable wages with U.S. companies that have transferred to Mexico. The corporations have added to the destruction of our country and our health."

UNIONS OPPOSE PRIVATISATION OF RHÔNE POULÉNC GROUP

In late October - early November 1992, the partial privatisation was announced in France of the pharmaceutical and chemical group Rhône Poulenc. The CGT trade union requested an immediate halt to the plan. At a meeting of the Administrative Council, representatives of the CGT voted against the plan, followed by those of the CFDT who, having asked for further information, received no explanations. The representatives of the CFE-CGE trade union abstained.

Several reasons explain this. Of course, since it was nationalised at the beginning of the 1980's, Rhône Poulenc has been run as a private company, shedding 12,182 jobs in nine years, and yet the status of staff remained better than in similar private sector companies. Back in 1987, when partial privatisation was envisaged, more than 15,000 workers from the group wrote to protest against this plan, whose consequences were seen in the closures of sectors of activity and production, staff cuts, changes in the social and trade union situations both in France and abroad, whilst at the same time, colossal sums were invested abroad, especially in the USA.

Rhône Poulenc is a transnational company employing 90,000 people worldwide, whose profits totalled US\$ 355 million in 1991. It owns several subsidiary companies under various names in the world, such as Rorer, May & Baker and Rhodia, whose employees will all be concerned by the strategic orientations that will ensue from the policy pursued by the general management of the group under the influence of the new private interests entering the governing body.

It is therefore totally logical that the trade unions of workers in Rhône Poulenc subsidiaries in the world are demanding information so that in full knowledge of the facts, they are able to give their opinion on such a plan. Exchanges of information amongst them and international trade union cooperation are also proving indispensable, especially in this context. This is, amongst others, one of the aims of the international meeting of trade unions of this group envisaged for mid-December 1992.

Any information and comments on the situation may be sent to the Coordinating Committee of Trade Unions of workers at Rhône Poulenc, Box 429, 93514 MONTREUIL CÉDEX, France.

CALL FOR SOLIDARITY WITH WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS IN CHAD

On 14 October, the Government of Chad launched a series of arbitrary actions against the Chadian Trade Unions (UST). By a decree, all activities of the UST were ordered to be suspended. Strikes were banned. The police force was ordered to take over the union offices. Many trade union leaders were arrested. Djibrine Assali Hamdallah, Secretary General of the UST, was dismissed along with hundreds of state employees.

These anti-trade union measures were taken by the government following strikes in protest against the non-payment of salary arrears of civil servants, the wage-cuts as well as tax increases.

The OATUU sent its Assistant Secretary General, Demba Diop, to Chad to find a solution to the conflict, but the President, Prime Minister and the Labour Minister refused to meet him.

The OATUU and the WFTU have called for international protests against the anti-union repression in Chad and to secure the cancellation of the arbitrary measures taken against the UST and its leaders.

Romania

TRADE UNIONS LAUNCH CAMPAIGN TO IMPROVE LIVING STANDARDS

On 16 November, Romania's trade unions launched a campaign to improve living standards. Health workers, drivers and miners started strikes or threatened strike action to back up their calls for wage increases and a price freeze.

Doctors and nurses began a nationwide strike, blaming the government for a decline in the health of Romania's 24.3 million people and demanding a 15 per cent pay increase.

Union leaders pointed out that government subsidises fuel prices for the army but not for the health sector. They demanded subsidies and better salaries.

The coalminers union demanded a halt to price liberalisation and they were supported by transport workers who have also threatened to stop work.

MINERS PROTESTS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

After thousands of Czech miners marched through Prague on 11 November, in protest at government plans to cut back the mining industry and slash jobs, the Czech government was obliged to

convene the relevant tripartite committee and to reveal its report on the restructuring of the industry.

While expressing his satisfaction at the convening of the tripartite body and over its deliberations, the President of the Federal Union of Mineworkers stressed that the miners were not against privatisation as such nor against economic reform. However, the miners had to protest strongly against the way the restructuring is being carried out and in particular, to draw attention to the lack of any social guarantees and the non-existence of serious retraining programmes.

A final decision affecting the future of 230,000 miners in the Czech Republic is to be taken by the government on 2 December. The union has warned that it is ready to resume its protest actions if a satisfactory solution is not arrived at.

Great Britain

UNIONS OPPOSE RAIL PRIVATISATION

The conservative government's plans to privatise British Rail (BR) services have been opposed by the trade unions. In a memorandum to a Parliamentary Committee, the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) stated:

"ASLEF believes that the aims and objectives of providing a comprehensive nation-wide rail service that is regularly available to customers (both passenger and freight), efficient, safe, reliable and available at an appropriate fare/cost structure are incompatible with private ownership. The private sector will seek to maximise profit at the expense of other considerations and will be tempted to invest only in profitable services and the development of railway property expecting a rate of return way above the 8% currently required of British Rail.

"This will inevitably lead to higher fares and freight costs, a truncated network, less regular services and the demise of less financially-attractive and viable, but socially necessary, railway services."

The union opposed the franchise system proposed by the government "as a mechanism that will lead to the break-up of the national network and the stripping of profitable routes and services."

The ASLEF called for a fully integrated transport policy covering road, rail, air and sea transport. The union's memorandum stated: "We see this as a fundamental responsibility of Government within an advanced industrial nation. We are appalled that the present Government has no such approach and doubt whether the case for

integration has been accepted even within the rail sector."

Hungary

RAIL WORKERS CALL A TWO- HOUR WARNING STRIKE

A two-hour strike between 6 a.m. and 7 a.m. was observed on 23 November by Hungarian railway workers. The protest action was to press their demands for higher wages and job security.

France

STRIKE IN AIRLINES AND IN PARIS METRO

On 23 November, ground staff and crews of Air France went on 24-hour strike and on the same day, the motormen in the Paris metro suspended their strike action after five days, following assurances of further negotiation on demands.

Portugal

24-HOUR STRIKE OF PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS

Public sector workers held a 24-hour strike in Portugal on 22 November, to protest against the government's 4.5 per cent pay offer for 1993. The union demanded a 12 per cent wage increase. Several schools and courts were forced to close, rubbish was not collected, Lisbon and bus services did not run. About 80 per cent of the state employed teachers and hospital workers supported the strike call.

The strike was backed by three two main trade union confederations, the CGT, the Intersindical and the UGT.

Uruguay

POLICE STRIKE FOR HIGHER PAY AND FOR RIGHT OF ASSOCIATION

Policemen of Uruguay went on strike on 18 November demanding higher pay and the right to a union. The policemen took over police buildings and left jails unattended.

flashes from the trade unions

Appears bimonthly

in English, French, Spanish

Address of the editorial board:

Flashes from the Trade Unions

Branická 112

140 00 Prague 4

Czechoslovakia

Telephone:

46 21 40; 46 20 85

Telefax:

46 13 78